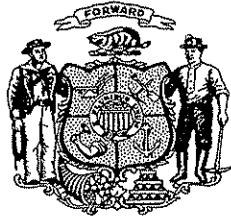


STATE OF WISCONSIN

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Mark Miller
Representative Mark Pocan

Date: October 30, 2009

Re: Wisconsin Government Accountability Board Report on Wisconsin
Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS)

Attached is a report on the Wisconsin Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) from July 1 through September 30, 2009, regarding the status of the SVRS core activities and noteworthy initiatives. The requirement to report this information sunset on June 30, 2009 in accordance with 2007 Wisconsin Act 20, Section 9227(IL), but the GAB is committed to continuing to report quarterly on the progress of the SVRS in order to keep the JFC informed and involved.

This report is being provided for your information only. No action by the Committee is required. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Attachments

MM:MP:jm

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JUDGE MICHAEL BRENNAN
Chair

KEVIN J. KENNEDY
Director and General Counsel

October 30, 2009

The Honorable Mark Miller, Senate Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 409 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

The Honorable Mark Pocan, Assembly Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 309 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Senator Miller and Representative Pocan:

I am pleased to provide you and your committee members with our first quarterly update of the status of the Wisconsin Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS). The reporting requirement for the Election Administration Fund that supports the Statewide Voter Registration System sunset on June 30, 2009, in accordance with 2007 Wisconsin Act 20, Section 9227(IL). Even though this mandate is expired, we committed to continuing to report quarterly on the progress of the SVRS in order to keep the JCF informed and involved.

SVRS continues to serve our local election partners effectively by being a valuable tool in administering elections. Equally important is the fact that our 1,922 county and municipal clerk customers and their staffs who rely on SVRS are noticing the measurable improvements we are steadily making. This attached report brings you up-to-date from July 1 through September 30, 2009, regarding the status of SVRS core activities and noteworthy initiatives.

Thank you for your commitment to the Statewide Voter Registration program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin J. Kennedy".

Kevin J. Kennedy
Director and General Counsel
Government Accountability Board

cc: Co-Chairs, Joint Legislative Committee on Audit
Senator Spencer Coggs
Secretary Michael Morgan, Department of Administration
Robert Lang, Legislative Fiscal Bureau
Vickie Holten, Legislative Fiscal Bureau
Cynthia Dombrowski, State Budget Office Analyst
Nathaniel E. Robinson, Elections Division Administrator
Barbara A. Hansen, SVRS Director

Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

Statewide Voter Registration System Quarterly Summary July 1, 2009 through September 30, 2009

The following activities occurred regarding the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) during this quarterly reporting period:

Quarterly Fiscal Summary

Expenditures for SVRS for July, August and September 2009 totaled \$378,846.43 which included:

- A. Staffing costs;
- B. Payments Made to Outside Contractors; and,
- C. Supplies and Services Costs.

Included in the first quarter expenditures for Fiscal Year 10 is the cost of printing and postage for the 87,000 HAVA Check letters and temporary workers used to respond to voters at a cost of \$49,392.17 for this initiative.

Expenditures for SVRS for July, August and September 2009 totaled \$378,846.43 which included salaries, supplies and services. In comparison, expenditures for the same period in Fiscal Year 9 totaled \$433,725.62.

SVRS Core Activities

1. Software Upgrade(s)

Several software patches that addressed performance improvement were applied in SVRS. SVRS users had reported memory errors and poor system performance. Department of Administration/Division of Enterprise (DET) and the Government Accountability Board (Board) staff identified suspected problem areas in the SVRS application. Software patches and performance monitoring tools were installed in SVRS. After the implementation of the patches, user complaints have been reduced.

2. Data Interface

Clerks continue to use SVRS to run HAVA Checks to validate against Department of Transportation (DOT) and Social Security Administration (SSA) records, and to confirm matches with Department of Corrections (DOC) for felon information, and Department of Health Services (DHS) for death data, as part of on-going HAVA compliance.

Clerks process HAVA Checks and confirm matches on an ongoing basis during the course of their daily election administration tasks, having done so since the Interfaces became functional in SVRS on August 6, 2008. During the months of July, August and

September 2009, clerks processed approximately 2,375 HAVA Checks with DOT/SSA in SVRS. (Retroactive HAVA Check information is not included in these totals. Please see the section regarding Retroactive HAVA Checks for more information on that initiative.)

3. Election Readiness

As the 2010 Election Cycle approaches, staff is already providing training and technical assistance to county and municipal clerks with their election readiness activities. For example:

- SVRS Checklists for the 2010 Election Cycle were drafted and shared with clerks.
- SVRS trainers are conducting classes in SVRS for beginners, advanced users and those who are looking for a refresher course in preparation for the upcoming 2010 election cycle.

4. Data Requests

The Board regularly receives requests from customers interested in purchasing electronic voter lists. The SVRS allows us to generate electronic voter lists statewide, for any county or municipality in the state, or by any election district, from congressional districts to school districts. The voter lists also include all elections that a voter has participated in, going back to 2006 when the system was deployed.

While there were no statewide elections during this quarter, Board staff received many inquiries from customers interested in purchasing data from the SVRS system. It is anticipated that the volume of requests for SVRS data will continue to increase as we approach the Spring 2010 elections. The following statistics demonstrate the activity in this area during this reporting period:

- Thirty-one inquiries were received requesting information on purchasing electronic voter lists from the SVRS system.
- Nine electronic voter lists were purchased.
- \$13,905 was paid for electronic voter lists.

Board staff also completed the fulfillment of a lengthy and complex open records request made by the Brennan Center for Justice. The request asked for a wide range of records relating to the SVRS, including policies used to inactivate voters.

Noteworthy SVRS Initiatives

1. Status: Retroactive HAVA Checks

On July 31, 2009, staff sent letters to approximately 87,000 voters who had a Retroactive HAVA Check result in a non-match. The response from voters to these letters was greater than anticipated. 16 temporary staff persons were hired to assist (answer calls,

return voicemails and respond to emails, etc.). More than 9,000 voters sent e-mails to the Board in response to the letters, and approximately 560 voters contacted the Board via USPS Mail or fax. All voters who left messages (5,550), and voters who sent letters or faxes (560) to the Board, have been responded to, or had their information validated. Approximately 1,800 of the voters who sent e-mails are in the process of being contacted.

- Of the 777,561 checks run in June, approximately 120,000 initially resulted in a non-match. Approximately 98,000 still show a non-match currently.
- 87,000 letters were sent in July to voters who showed a non-match. A second batch of letters to the remaining non-matches will be sent starting in November.
- Updated information for approximately 25,000 voters who responded to the Board's letter have been collected. These voters will be corrected and have their HAVA Check rerun.

2. Status: Efforts to Improve the Statewide Voter Registration System's Performance

As previously reported, an Ad-Hoc SVRS Study Team was formed to evaluate the SVRS and plan for the future of the application. During the past quarter:

- A Request for Information (RFI) was released on August 18, 2009, with responses due by September 18, 2009. The RFI asked vendors to provide information on services that they offer related to maintenance of the system (including upgrades and performance improvements); if they have replacement systems available; if they have hardware/infrastructure management services; and if they offer services related to the upcoming redistricting that will result from the 2010 census.
- Eleven (11) responses were received from vendors. 5 vendors provided information on maintenance and enhancement services. 4 vendors provided information on replacement systems. 4 vendors provided information on hardware/infrastructure management services. 4 vendors provided information on services related to redistricting.
- Two of the vendors specifically recommended enhancing the existing SVRS rather than purchasing a replacement system, as the cost, risk, and effort to replace the system outweighs the benefits of replacement. This corroborates recommendations previously made by the DOA/Division of Enterprise Technology (DET). DET reviewed the SVRS Source Code and indicated that the architecture was both sound and robust, and could be upgraded and improved without requiring significant redesign.
- The replacement systems described in the RFI responses did not include significantly improved or enhanced functionality over the current SVRS. In fact, some of the replacement systems had less functionality.

The Board has also continued to receive feedback from local election clerks regarding the SVRS. We have been pleased the feedback continues to be positive, as the SVRS system

is continuously being improved in response to clerks' concerns. Several clerks specifically expressed that the Absentee functionality is greatly improved, making it a convenient and reliable way to track their absentee voters and ballots. The SVRS system was also used throughout the state for recent school board and other local special elections.

3. Online Voter Registration Initiative

The Online Voter Registration Team has been appointed. The Team is charged with researching other states' online registration best practices, and advising on how online voter registration may become a reality in Wisconsin. A project plan and charter are under development. As part of the data gathering phase of this project, the Board, DOA/Division of Enterprise Technology, and DOT staff participated in a telephone conference in late September to begin the discussion of the possibility of instant verification of DMV identification information providing for real-time HAVA Checks. The ability to have real-time DMV verification would greatly enhance online registration capability.

4. Improving the Canvass Process

The Team to improve the canvas process and retire the Board's current election administration software, SWEBIS II, is conducting a gap analysis to determine what enhancements can be made to transition the ballot access and canvas process to SVRS. The SVRS includes much of this functionality already, and will require some enhancements and tweaks in order to fully handle this process.

5. Voter/Felon Comparison

In accordance with State statutes, the Board is performing an audit that compares voter participation records in SVRS against convicted felon records at DOC. This audit is used to detect if felons improperly voted in the General election. The audit includes several steps:

- Step 1 - Compare felons against voter participation recorded in the SVRS. This step is complete.
- Step 2 - Send potential matches that resulted from Step 1 to DOC to have them confirm that the person was in fact ineligible on the date of the election. This step is complete.
- Step 3 - Send the potential matches left after Step 2 to municipal clerks for them to verify if the voter and the felon are the same person. This step is in process. The names have been sent to clerks, who are reviewing the names and providing updates to G.A.B.
- Step 4 - Send any potential matches that remain after Step 3 to District Attorneys for investigation. This step will be completed when all of the updates from clerks have been received and compiled.

SVRS: An Effective Election Management and Administration Tool

Since 2006, the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) has been used to facilitate and advance the management and administration of elections in Wisconsin. In the 2006 February Primary and April Spring Election, 21 of the State's 72 counties and their respective municipalities use SVRS as their primary election management tool. For example, SVRS:

- Maintains individual voter records along with voter participation and voter registration history.
- Generates poll lists for use on Election Day.
- Serves as the data entry portal for voter registration applications
- Maintains all address ranges and associated district information for voters which in turn produces a ballot style for each voter based on the contests for an election.
- Tracks absentee voter applications and ballots.
- Provides a reporting function for local election officials on voter data, absentee voter data, voter participation and voting districts.
- Supports our Voter Public Access (VPA) functionality that provides access to any voter, 24/7, to review respective voter histories and information about their representatives. VPA showcases sample ballots and referenda, as well as provide information on where to vote.
- Make accessible 24/7 online, web-based SVRS Basic and Advance Training to Clerk customers who use SVRS.

These aforementioned examples are only a small offering of SVRS' helpful capabilities and functionalities. All 72 counties and 1,851 municipalities successfully used for the 2006 September Partisan Primary, and have continually used SVRS to advance the administration of elections in Wisconsin. Since February 29, 2008, when the Government Accountability Board's staff, in partnership with the Department of Administration, Division of Enterprise Technology, assumed support, maintenance and improvement of SVRS, customer satisfaction has increased exponentially.

DET, working in conjunction with Board staff, has made numerous improvements via upgrades to SVRS functionalities. As a result, core functions have been simplified and/or expanded, additional functions have been created, SVRS performance is steadily improving, and the system does not experience the large number of outages as it once did. Not only has SVRS continues to serve our local election partners effectively by being a valuable tool in administering elections, equally important is the fact that our 1,922 county and municipal clerk customers and their staffs who rely on SVRS are noticing SVRS' measurable improvements.

90-day Forecast

1. Voter/Felon Comparison – Staff will refer individuals to the appropriate district attorneys, when the name of a person was found who is on the DOC list and was a voter in SVRS for the November 2008 election.

2. Retroactive HAVA Checks – Letters will be sent to an additional 16,000 voters whose comparison of voter information to DOT/SSA resulted in a non-match. 10 limited term employees are being recruited and hired to support this effort.
3. Inter-State Voter Registration Data Sharing – One of the methods to improve the accuracy of voter information in SVRS is to share voter registration data between states, and discovery the detection of voter fraud, particularly the states that border Wisconsin: Illinois, Iowa, Michigan and Minnesota. A Board project team is poised to launch an initiative to research and engage in data sharing with neighboring states.
4. IS Project-Project Positions – Two IS positions for support of SVRS are currently in recruitment.
5. Election Readiness – Staff will continue to assist Clerks to prepare for the 2010 Elections.
6. A Graduated Plan for Absorbing Federally-Funded Positions with General Purpose Revenue is Needed – The Board had planned to present a proposal in the last budget for transitioning Federally funded Elections Division staff positions to GPR funding in anticipation of a reduced level of Federal funds. The economic constraints, however, on the recent budget and the availability of additional Federal funds led to a postponement of this initiative.

During the next quarter, staff will develop a graduated plan for absorbing Federally-funded positions with GPR. The majority of the Election Division's staff and operations are supported with Federal funds. Federal funds support our education, training and technical assistance to 1,922 county and municipal local election officials to ensure that Wisconsin's elections continue to remain open, fair, transparent and conducted with the highest integrity.

Federal funds are limited and subject to cease without much advance notification. During the next reporting period, we will develop a succession plan for an orderly and timely transition from Federal funds to GPR.